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**Integrating Organization Studies and Community Psychology: A Process Model of an  
Organizing Sense of Place in Working Lives**

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**ABSTRACT**

In this conceptual paper, I propose to advance thinking about organization theory in community contexts by theorizing about the roles of place and space in working lives. I argue that work in the mainstream of organization studies often downplays contextual aspects of the community-based places that workers inhabit, largely by trying to generalize across them. A colourless language of firms, institutions, and agents can obscure more humanistic, ecological understandings of how workers occupy and make use of various places for supporting their well-being and sense of self. A sense of place (and by implication, space) has the potential to draw together relevant existing work at the organization studies-community psychology interface more comprehensively. I therefore integrate key ideas from this interface with sensemaking theory and present a three-stage process model of an organizing sense of place. I conclude by discussing the implications arising for future research, theorizing, and practice.

## INTRODUCTION

This conceptual paper proposes that the interface between community psychology and organization studies can be more effectively mutually integrated via greater ongoing theorization of the rich mediating concept of place or a sense of place. Concepts of place and space have a broad and deep interdisciplinary knowledge base extending across many fields, including human geography, economic geography, anthropology, sociology, community psychology, environmental psychology, leisure studies, industrial relations, architecture, urban studies, and to some extent organization studies and other branches of social science. Our highest aspirational ideals, power struggles, contradictions, psychological needs, and social identifications are all to some crucial extent guarded by, threatened by, and inscribed into the material and architectural space around us, parsed into places that shape our well-being, (social) cognition, moods, actions, and sense of self (de Botton, 2006).

It follows that organizations and workplaces are self-evidently places, places where we work, play, volunteer, and exchange goods and services (Boyd & Angelique, 2002). This understanding might be extended to mutually connect organizations with communities; whether we are powerful or powerless, whether boundaries are permeable or impermeable, we are connected to a set of continually organizing places, which we must inhabit and navigate via role transitions and our interdependent connections with ecological systems of professional and organizational communities that function very much like neighbourhoods throughout our working lives (Boyd, 2014; Boyd and Angelique, 2002). Many workers and citizens are positioned as ‘place-making’ agents and ‘place-taking’ recipients as they provide services, work remotely or enjoy leisure and other community activities at organizational locations. In some cases, boundaries between work, leisure, social groupings, life domains, roles and activities may become more or less blurred (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000; Pratt & Foreman, 2000). In any case, communities and organizations are both collectives, and

the connection between the two becomes very profound when we consider that many of us will potentially spend more time working, from youth well into old age, than we will sleeping, eating, playing, in the company of family, or almost any other major activity (Dutton, Roberts, & Bednar, 2010). The workplace is thus a key psychological referent for identity, commitment, and a sense of community (Boyd and Nowell, 2014; Klein & D'Aunno, 1986), where the concepts of place and community also often go hand-in-hand, as communities tend to be physically or virtually co-located at a place or set of places (e.g. Batty, 1997; Fried, 2000).

The definition of place itself is highly contested, can be viewed from a range of worldviews or philosophical perspectives, is shaped by demographic and economic trends, varies across time and cultures, has its own pantheon of key thinkers (Hubbard, Kitchin, & Valentine, 2004), and can be considered at different levels of abstraction (Cresswell, 2004). However, the complexity of defining place is also arguably a key strength – opening up such discussion allows for many different ways of looking at work activity, non-work activity, and the very nature and fabric of organizations and communities. A general definition of place or ‘sense of place’ in line with sociology and human geography, regards it as “seen, for each individual, as a centre of meanings, intentions, or felt values; a focus of emotional or sentimental attachment; a locality of felt significance” (Pred, 1983, p.49). Space and place are closely interrelated concepts; a space might contain a place, or vice versa, or the terms might be used interchangeably or on their own with little distinction. There is always likely to be some inevitable confusion in usage between the two, with space arguably being more abstract, factual, geometric, far-reaching, physical, and/or nomothetic. In line with other key thinkers, I would seek to argue that place is where meaning becomes invested – by territory, attachment, naming, participation, and so on – and thus a space is socially produced as, or transformed into, a place (Cresswell, 2004; Gieryn, 2000; Lefebvre, 1991; Pred, 1984; Tuan,

2001). To put it more specifically, the space-place distinction can be summarized in terms of how “space and physical features are mobilised and transformed into place through human residence and involvement in local activities and routines; through familiarity and the accumulation of memories; through the bestowal of meaning by images, ideas, and symbols; through the “actual” experience of meaningful or moving events and the establishment of individual and communal identity, security, and concern” (Pred, 1983, p.49). The physical, the psychological and the social, as well as levels of analysis issues, will be returned to as points of reflection later in this article.

In the sections that follow, I will highlight the contributions that the concept of place can make to organization studies and community psychology, as well as its general potential for linking and mutually enriching both fields. Then I will develop an organizing model of place, using sensemaking theory and literature feeding into the organization studies-community psychology interface to develop three broad process-oriented stages that seek to describe the continuous self-organization of places in relation to working lives and communities. Finally, I will conclude the article with reflections on some of the challenges and opportunities implicated in testing the model, as well as related implications for future research and practice. In doing so, I hope that the article will make three main contributions to organization studies and community psychology. Firstly, in this article I position place as a powerful, rich, slightly neglected concept for facilitating research integration between community psychology and organization studies, by mutually aligning relevant literature that surrounds this interfacing boundary. Secondly, I contribute to theory development at the interface of community psychology and organization studies by drawing on sensemaking theory to deliver a broad phase-based model, one that continues to engage more explicitly some of the process-oriented, micro-macro, systemic tensions at the heart of organizational and community dynamics (Boyd, 2014). Thirdly, and finally, by leveraging and taking stock

of relevant existing research on place and space, this article will consolidate somewhat scattered work and help to avoid redundancy or reinventing the wheel when considering the geography of organizational places and corresponding community or environmental interventions.

### **THE STATUS OF PLACE IN RELATION TO ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT STUDIES**

There is, perhaps inevitably, no one neat way to characterize a singular body of work linking place and space to the study of organizations and management. However, separate batches of research can be identified according to their disciplinary footings, references to seminal thinkers, scope or scale of analysis, methodological and paradigmatic commitments, authors' backgrounds, and framings in terms of particular discourses or issues. Rather than attempting to exhaustively cover everything, key bodies of work will be meaningfully signposted here in passing.

At a fairly large-scale, macro or societal level of analysis, traditions within sociology, industrial relations, and human and economic geography have been trying to unite the geographical issues of place and community with work and employment for decades, moving gradually from classic Marxian aggregate research considering the struggles inherent to uneven capitalist development (e.g. Harvey, 1978; Massey, 1995), into more evolved conceptualizations of place, space, and scale as highly socially constructed, agentic, relational, dynamic, and permeable across the global and the local (Harvey, 1990; Ward, 2007). One common thread of this work is the fact that dynamics of struggle, conflict, negotiation and power between key organizational stakeholders (e.g. unions, multinationals, (non)governmental bodies, regulators) play out across spaces and places over time, with significant possibilities for shaping and imagining the social reproduction of capitalism in

different ways (Herod, Rainnie, & McGrath-Champ, 2007). Disputes remain however, over the extent to which capitalism forms an ultimate unfettered globalized geographical backdrop (Massey, 2004; Thompson, 2013), fragmenting and disconnecting economic and organizational senses of place, often destructively so.

If we zoom in a bit closer, what else lies alongside this more sociological, industrial, economic, geographical tradition linking work, organizations, and employment to place? In this instance, there are the overlapping, variously labelled fields of organization studies (OS), organizational behavior (OB), organization science, management studies, industrial-organizational (I-O) psychology, and critical management studies (CMS). Most of the work of these fields zooms in to consider individual firms, groups, and workers in their work environments more closely. However, I would argue that much of this research is biased towards thinking of place as something relatively self-evident, fixed, dictated by the products or services of the organization, or subordinate to concepts like culture, underpinned by a curiously partial conviction that ‘the people make the place’ (Schneider, 1987), and not vice versa. Indeed, much management and organizational behavior scholarship has been deemed overly preoccupied with an outdated person-centred staffing model that fails to capture the dynamic contextual realities of 21<sup>st</sup> century organizational performances *in situ* across jobs and settings, instead being intensely concerned with “identifying and measuring job-related individual characteristics to predict individual level job performance” (Cascio & Aguinis, 2008, p.133), resulting in limited success in terms of predictive accuracy and generalizability.

Ongoing frustration over the fact that much organizational research is too person-centred – as opposed to more place and community-centred – is reflected in periodic, repeated calls to reclaim a richer, fieldwork-type emphasis on ‘context’, ‘work’, ‘discovery’, ‘interaction’, and ‘process’ (Bechky, 2011; Barley & Kunda, 2001; Johns, 2006; Locke, 2011). Varied echoes of these person-context concerns also occur from within community



psychology (e.g. Keys & Frank, 1987; Riger, 2001). Implicit in much of these discussions of communities and organizations is that positivistic, more quantitatively-focused work does not always get at the richly interactive person-setting realities, or as Keys and Frank (1987) have it, “the search for generalized, causal, linear laws of human behavior that apply in any place at any time to any individual is futile. Such a search seeks to objectify human beings in ways that ignore the essential changing qualities of context, time, and person and is therefore woefully incomplete in its account of human behavior and experience” (p.242). Whether or not extreme positions on this are asserted, the relatively local, qualitative, idiographic, fluid uniqueness of place seems to provoke these debates, although in the face of rationalizing forces, absolute uniqueness may of course be more of an elusive myth, wished-for ideal or space-place paradox than a reality (e.g. Martin, Feldman, Hatch & Sitkin, 1983; Ritzer, 2000; Schultze & Boland, 2000). It can thus be argued that, epistemologically and ontologically, there is a need to reconcile positivism and anti-positivism to find more ethical, pragmatic, multi-paradigmatic approaches in the middle (Wicks & Freeman, 1998), something I aim to encourage throughout this article.

Nevertheless, there is some scholarship on organizational spaces; much of it does in fact constitute one fairly significant body of work that has been occasionally reviewed in search of robust micro relationships between environmental design features and individual employee perceptions (Elsbach & Pratt, 2007; Sundstrom & Sundstrom, 1986), and here simple causal explanations are ultimately resisted in favor of guiding schemes that recognize trade-offs, competing tensions, opposing effects, and multilevel scales of analysis (Taylor & Spicer, 2007). Moreover, whilst this work is undoubtedly valuable, there tends to be a relatively narrow focus on the physicality of office cubicles and basic design features (e.g. Davis, 1984; Davis, Leach, & Clegg, 2011; Elsbach & Bechky, 2007), highlighting perhaps a need for broader thinking and a more careful balancing of the ‘doubly constructed’ physical

or material alongside the socially constructed, interpreted, and semiotic (Gieryn, 2000). What this research has done, I would argue, is progress the idea of the physical work environment as having considerable psychological importance over and above being a mere hygiene factor to be kept within an acceptable range to avoid negative outcomes (Herzberg, 1966), but whilst falling short of incorporating the rich variety of places and community settings beyond a limited set of stereotypical places, such as offices and factory floors. In a similar fashion, metaphorical images of organizations, whilst valuable for some generalized purposes, do not explicitly capture notions of discrete places either; they tend to focus on abstracted systems of people as machine cogs, biological networks, or cultural tribes (Morgan, 1997), conceptualizing the organization as a large singular aggregate, rather than as a more dynamic intentional entity embedded in a social landscape or ecological set of places (King, Felin, & Whetten, 2010). Nevertheless, worthwhile streams of research on organizational space continue to evolve from these positions, chiefly in forms emphasizing ergonomics, socio-technical systems, human factors, remote or mobile working, nomadic working, and environmental design. However, I would again argue that with the emphasis on technology, equipment, particular recurring samples (e.g. white-collar professional or knowledge teleworkers), and the concrete physicality of space, an understanding of the explicit variety that places signify and create is still lacking amongst managerial and organizational scholars. In other words, this research has tackled some of the more physical, concrete, and functional aspects of ‘space’, rather than the more subjectively meaningful, discrete, and social functions of ‘place’.

One final relevant body of work stems more from a critical management studies perspective, also on organizational space, but trying to reconnect spatial experiences more with place, at least in terms of wider social, cultural, and societal realities, almost in a sense taking us full circle back towards the more macro-oriented work in industrial relations,

sociology, and economic geography discussed above. Much of this work is in more of a philosophical European tradition of critical management scholarship, and instead of looking for straightforward causal relationships between persons and aspects of their organizational environments, has more to say about the dynamic interplay in organizations between power relations, control, agency, discourses, resistance, territoriality, materiality, temporality, history, identity construction, architectural aesthetics, and embodiment (e.g. Beyes & Steyaert, 2012; Clegg & Kornberger, 2006; Dale & Burrell, 2008; Kornberger & Clegg, 2004; van Marrewijk & Yanow, 2010). This work often draws deeply on the extensive work of key philosophical thinkers, such as Michel Foucault and Henri Lefebvre, among others. What this research uniquely emphasizes is the symbolic capacity of places, real and imagined, and corresponding built environments, to both influence and be influenced by, the actions and ideas of managers and employees operating over space and time, shaping what an organization can or should be in practice. This critical approach is geared to fill in some of the gaps described above; gaps in our understanding of macro-micro influences, situational effects, and interactionist dynamics between organizational actors, ideologies, places, and spaces, as well as bringing some important contextual variation back into focus, in terms of creative, entrepreneurial, bureaucratic, and even utopian community organizational forms (Gill & Larson, 2014; Hjorth, 2005; Munro & Jordan, 2013; Parker, 1998; Zhang & Spicer, 2014).

There are of course, other topics, trends, and agendas that might link place and space to management, although the constraints of a single article preclude their full discussion. These might include the operation of place in terms of work-life balance, virtual working arrangements, the informal economy, globalization, post-colonialism, the urban planning of densely populated smart cities, and so on. In any case, place and space have slowly but surely been linked to the study of organizations in the various literatures described above, although

there is perhaps some disconnect between these relatively recent, scattered bodies of work and still much emerging potential to appreciate place into a richer integration of organizational contexts, relations, and possibilities. It is hard to imagine an organization and its activities that don't exist in space and manifest themselves in terms of an occupied, contested, constructed place or set of places of some kind. With this stage set, it is at this point that place acts as a linking concept that usefully bridges the study of organizations to community psychology, which, with its own tools, techniques, and content area mandates, mutually sharpens and refines a coherent agenda for place-based research and practice. Community psychology offers a guiding value-based concern for ethical, humanistic, systemic social changes to situated, interdependent collectives and institutions, and a concern over the quality of life of their constituent individuals (Boyd, 2014; Keys & Frank, 1987).

### **THE STATUS OF PLACE IN RELATION TO COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY**

As with place and space, there are potential semantic issues concerning the precise conceptualizations of the difference between place and community, and there may be a temptation to use the terms interchangeably. Certainly, communities, organizations, and places as terms all reflect interrelated media governing how close scholars can get to the realities of social systems of individuals and collectives. However, communities and places can clearly exist and change somewhat independently of one another, and places can concern physical locations, whereas communities can concern ties between people, although communities can of course typically be attached to certain places. More simply, community can be said to reflect the quality of people-place relationships, however local or global, entrenched or transitory (Fried, 2000). Put another way, place, and the potential co-presence it implies, is clearly an important factor, if not a decisive one, shaping the execution or achievement of community, and which of two extreme possibilities – engagement or

estrangement – the environmental conditions tend to produce more of in the occupants (Gieryn, 2000).

Reconciling this tricky relationship between place and community is in no small part what lies at the heart of long-standing political, social and ethical concerns over balancing solidarity with flexibility, security with freedom, and belongingness with individuality (Adler & Heckscher, 2006; Bauman, 2001). At the level of grander societal narratives, these tensions surrounding our psychological sense of community are shaped – positively and negatively – by interrelated forces like globalization, rationalization, and technology, mediated partly through the places we occupy, the people we interact with in those places, and the ways in which we interact with them (e.g. Koles & Nagy, 2014; Marsella, 1998; Ritzer, 2000). These forces are speculated about in terms of their capacity to erode community and lead to its decline, or perhaps revive or reinvent it in terms of the bridging and bonding qualities of ties connecting people. Social ties have the potential to create social capital for a community, defined typically in terms of the cooperative resources of goodwill contained within and across social networks of actors (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Halpern, 2004; Putnam, 1995; Putnam & Feldstein, 2004).

In relation to these societal forces, in terms of scale, a place can cover anything from the most private arrangements of objects and rooms through to more publicly declared nations and regions that test our sense of collectiveness and space (Lefebvre, 1991; Taylor & Spicer, 2007). Likewise, community representations can range from the smallest civic groups through to larger ‘imagined communities’ that aspire to unite nations and other inclusive political constituencies (Anderson, 2006; Calhoun, 2002; Fine & Harrington, 2004). Furthermore, organizational forms and organizational change discourse also reflect speculations on these forces; with scholars trying to gauge how ‘unfettered’, ‘boundaryless’, decentralized, flexible, and adaptable to turbulent changes organizational forms can be or

become (Child & McGrath, 2001; Oswick, Grant, Michelson & Wailes, 2005). Ultimately, what 21<sup>st</sup> century communities will look like necessarily overlaps with what forms 21<sup>st</sup> century organizations and their management paradigms will take. The ultimate organizing struggle for form in a knowledge-intensive global economy seems to involve reconciling the bases upon which people can be collectively brought together; prices for markets, authority relations for hierarchies, and self-organizing, trust-based professional collaborations for communities (Adler & Heckscher, 2006; Hamel, 2011). With a prevailing rhetoric of flatter hierarchies, growing virtual work, open knowledge sharing, and conditions of uncertain complexity, there are assertions that community forms, or at least hybrids thereof, need to be experimented with afresh amongst workforces, as they represent the most effective way of promoting trusting, lasting relationships (Adler, 2001; Hamel, 2011; Johns & Gratton, 2013).

This is where combining these grander debates about forms and environments (and hence places) with community psychology comes in. Community psychology has high potential for grounding these debates and taking them forward, given its more specific, value-driven focus on “understanding people in context and attempting to change those aspects of the community that pollute the possibilities for local citizens to control their own lives and improve their community” (Trickett, 2009, p.396). Since the birth of the field, usually dated from 1965, its blend of emphases on morality, social context, criticism, intervention, prevention, action, and change has inevitably at times led to much introspection and reflection on the challenges of making progress through its efforts (e.g. Trickett, 1996; Weinstein, 2006). Many of these aims are aligned with the adoption of a theoretical sensemaking perspective, which I draw upon further below. The field of community psychology is thus also perhaps more pragmatic and grounded than – although of course never entirely free from – high-level ideological debates surrounding the politics of communitarianism (Collins, 2010; Friedman, 1994; Etzioni, 1998).

What is further striking about community psychology, and something I am keen to emphasize here, is the strong potential relevance of place and space-related constructs to much of the field's body of work (e.g. Dunham, 1986; Nowell, Berkowitz, Deacon, & Foster-Fishman, 2006), as well as that of the closely related field of environmental psychology (Stokols, 1995), where place constructs are perhaps even more strongly focused upon (e.g. Gustafson, 2001; Stedman, 2002). It is therefore not uncommon to read research narratives linking together concepts like place attachment, place identity, place dependence, and a meaningful sense of place (e.g. Devine-Wright, 2009; Long & Perkins, 2007; Pretty, Chipuer & Bramston, 2003). There is often a sort of semantic chain, at risk of confusing its referents, linking a physical environment in space to a sense of place (Stedman, 2003), with a sense of place in turn contributing towards predicting a sense of community, particularly in the work of Doug Perkins and colleagues (Long & Perkins, 2007; Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Perkins, Hughey & Speer, 2002).

Although work linking place and community concepts may still have ground to cover, what is clear is that psychological sense of community (PSOC) is an extremely important community psychology outcome for would-be community members (Chavis & Pretty, 1999; McMillan, 1996), one that is typically tied to and predicted by aspects of place, and it is a concept that has strong potential for being carried across into management and organizational literatures (Boyd & Nowell, 2014). The workplace exists as a salient place to many societal stakeholders, and thus has long represented a key referent for driving a psychological sense of community, or lack of (Klein & D'Aunno, 1986). In line with this, other fields and movements in management are sympathetic to the aim of linking workplace with community (Boyd & Angelique, 2002), two key ones being the field of Organization Development (OD) and its community-based roots in the work of Kurt Lewin (Boyd, 2010), as well as the related field of Socio-technical Systems Design (STSD), which seeks to optimally balance the social

needs of workplace constituents with technical features of the working environment, often amidst corresponding organizational changes and interventions within a complex system (e.g. Clegg & Walsh, 2004; Davis, Challenger, Jayewardene, & Clegg, 2014).

In sum, the field of community psychology has complex links with place and organization, communities shaping them and being shaped by them, often amidst complex systemic and social changes. Ultimately, organization and community can be seen as two competing, complementary metaphors or images informing social actors' continuous struggle to make sense of their status as embedded in various collectives (Ford & Harding, 2004; Sergiovanni, 1994), and the socially constructed, place-based conceptualizations of the corresponding physical environments that emerge over time, interaction, and reflection.

### **A PROCESS MODEL OF AN ORGANIZING SENSE OF PLACE IN WORKING LIVES**

The interface between organization studies and community psychology stands to benefit from certain theories and approaches that bridge the two fields, including Socio-technical Systems, Organization Development, chaos theory, organizational ecology, new public management, and others (Boyd, 2014; Boyd & Anglique, 2002). Here I propose that organizational sensemaking can be a valuable addition to this potential repertoire of theories, given that its rich research tradition, originating with the work of Karl Weick (Weick, 1979), blends an appropriate emphasis on context, ecological change, crisis, open systems, multilevel analysis, evolution, complexity, chaos, learning, and messy multi-stakeholder problems (e.g. see Calton & Payne, 2003; Colville, Brown, & Pye, 2012; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010; Weick, Sutcliffe, Obstfeld, 2005). In this way, this rich body of work is very relevant to community psychology, not just organization studies, given that it helps to resolve micro-macro paradoxes by its flexible approach to multiple levels of analysis



(intrasubjective, intersubjective, and collective) (Klein, Tosi, & Cannella, 1999; Weick, 1995), as well as providing a pragmatic, ethical focus on acknowledging how reality is socially constructed, a position sitting usefully between positivistic and anti-positivistic extremes (Wicks & Freeman, 1998). Sensemaking offers a fleshed-out theoretical backdrop to how place mediates a sense of organization and/or community, all the more crucial given that many other theories in organizational behavior arguably don't have as much to say about geography, place, or community (Miner, 1984, 2003).

Sensemaking is something of a meta-theory, and can be defined in terms of its seven key principles or features: identity, retrospection, enactment, social activities, ongoing processes, cue extraction, and plausible accounts (Weick, 1995). More specifically, it can be defined as "a process, prompted by violated expectations, that involves attending to and bracketing cues in the environment, creating intersubjective meaning through cycles of interpretation and action, and thereby enacting a more ordered environment from which further cues can be drawn" (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p.67). Clearly, these principles and this definition of sensemaking have relevance to places of work and community; as we move within and between places we seek architectural, environmental, cognitive, social, and community coherence of some routine remembered kind, alongside the possibility of incidental surprises and violations that will prompt further cycles of interpretation to continually restore a sense of meaning to our lives. Karl Weick has made a 'sensemaking recipe' of the maxim 'how can I know what I think until I see what I say?' (Anderson, 2006). Yet we might just as well re-phrase this as 'how can I know what I think until I see where I am?' Indeed, sensemaking has been linked to place and community, but only rarely (e.g. Eddy, 2003; Kavanagh & Kelly, 2002; Whiteman & Cooper, 2011), and clearly, considerable potential for development of these associations remains.

In order to shape this juxtaposition of sensemaking and place into a more formal contribution, I thus propose here a process model of an organizing sense of place in working lives, as shown in Figure 1. The model is intended as a broadly descriptive tool, and given the subjectivity, contradiction, dualisms, and scope inherent to the concept of place, the model resists trying to pin it down too much to specific levels of analysis or constructs, which would create unnecessary and unworkable complexity, as well as some analytic and causal primacy. Instead, the model can be used as a simple schema for classifying and organizing ultimate construct choices in empirical work, and as a broadly flexible way of investigating how various social and community actors move through referent places fluidly in a loosely coupled fashion (Orton & Weick, 1990), generating emergent interaction orders and interpretive systems (Daft & Weick, 1984), that, through successive cycles with reciprocal feedback loops, lead to senses of place and community. It is chiefly concerned with understandings at the intra-subjective and inter-subjective levels of analysis from the bottom up, in terms of individuals and small groups within a single community (Drazin, Glynn & Kazanjian, 1999), but can equally be seen as a building block process that co-occurs many times in larger collective aggregates of interconnected places and communities, the latter indicated by the ‘aggregation space’ serving as a background box to the model.

The three-phase structure of the model – place readiness, place socialization, and place fulfilment – is inspired by, and derived from, notable analogous models in the social sciences, namely Kurt Lewin’s three-step unfreezing-moving-refreezing model of planned organizational change (Burnes, 2004), Karl Weick’s enactment-selection-retention (ESR) model of organizing (Weick, 1979; Weick et al., 2005), and to some extent IPO inputs-processes-outcomes models of team or group effectiveness (Mathieu, Maynard, Rapp & Gilson, 2008), with their episodic and cyclical reciprocal feedback loops. Relating to Weick’s (1979) organizing model, the material existence of a building or environment constitutes an

ecological input to the three focal phases. The model also thus adopts a process perspective (Hernes & Weik, 2007); the organization of places and community in working lives is presented as an ongoing organizing process of continuous change open to local revisions, which is in line with sensemaking accounts (Hernes & Maitlis, 2010), community psychology's action research emphasis on the participatory process of interventions (Keys & Frank, 1987), and the wider practical realities of workers and other actors who are embedded within relatively nomadic, mobile, virtual, and even perhaps urban *flâneur* processes of daily existence (Costas, 2013; Jenks & Neves, 2000; Johns & Gratton, 2013; Lucas, 2014).

Overall, the model is intended to constitute a theoretical contribution that facilitates disciplined imagination and bricolage (Boxenbaum & Rouleau, 2011; Cornelissen, 2006), doing so in terms of generating a challenging bringing together of metaphors, images and conceptual language in an attempt to encourage further courageous acts, questionings, and interpretations in trying to outline the complex role of places in working lives. Next I outline and indicate some key aspects of the three main phases of place organizing represented in the model.

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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### ***Place Readiness***

The issues reflected in the place readiness phase center to a significant extent around person-environment or person-organization fit, the latter being broadly defined as “the compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when: (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both” (Kristof, 1996, p.4-5). As indicated in Figure 1, the social actors arrive at a place afresh for the first time or on any successive occasion, and try to appraise and interpret various

aspects of their mutual compatibilities in an ongoing way. If we variously re-phrase person-organization fit to also consider ‘person-place’, ‘person-environment’ and ‘person-community’ fit, then opportunities for cross-fertilization between community psychology and organization studies become apparent too. Person-environment fit has some standing within community psychology (e.g. Foster-Fishman & Keys, 1997; Rappaport, 1977), with it being a key concept shaping the relative success of an intervention on a community population, and a key ingredient attracting and binding members together to ultimately foster a sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Thus a key aspect of theorizing and researching place readiness is looking at aspects of the person-environment fit of actors present in a particular place; a crucial sensemaking act that determines the ongoing organizing of would-be members engaging each other within a community. When researching settings such as work, school, and healthcare for their sense of place, place readiness guides research towards an admittedly large remit of potential person-environment constructs covering: work-family issues, life stressors, social resources, demographic characteristics, personality traits, ability, motivation, preferences, needs, values, coping appraisals, coping resources, well-being and so on (see e.g. Edwards, 2008; Moos, 1987).

The tension underlying the person-environment fit of place readiness is phenomenological; in terms of whether people and environment are treated separately before combining them, compared in terms of discrepancies on some single standard or feature, or multiple aspects of fit or synergies between the two are more directly and reciprocally assessed, varying from the more reductionist up to the more holistic and gestalt, respectively (Edwards, Cable, Williamson, Lambert, & Shipp, 2006). Hence the relationships between a person and their environment can be mutually enacting, dynamic, and complex (Dale, 2005; Lefebvre, 1991). Place shapes us, and we shape place, and the cycle repeats, with continual adjustments. In sensemaking terms, this is termed a ‘double interact’, and it helps to reduce

equivocality and generate some sense of sustained organized stability (Weick, 1979).

Thinking this way is important for identifying theoretical extremes that accord some causal and analytic primacy to place or people at the expense of the other; either asserting that the ‘people make the place’, for example in climate discourses favoured by organizational behavior research (Schneider, 1987), or alternatively, the ‘if we build it they will come’ assertion relatively more likely to be favored by narratives more preoccupied with the aesthetics and ambient features of the pre-existing built architectural environment (de Botton, 2006; Evans, 2003; Halpern, 1995).

Erving Goffman is one sociological thinker that provides a relative treasure trove of work that, although somewhat reductionist in its micro-sociological aspects and deterministic in its ethological ones, helps partially reconcile people with place in readiness terms. Some of Goffman’s (1963, 1971, 1974) key books are monographic works thoroughly describing the building blocks of human social behavior in public situations; the norms, customs, schemas, frames of reference, interaction orders, territories, and impression management signalling that operate in a rich variety of places. I contend that there is huge potential for re-applying Goffman’s work to the twenty-first century aspects of place readiness, in helping to understand how we socially situate ourselves in face-to-face community contact, particularly with regards to the Internet-enabled mobile technologies, globalized cosmopolitanism, and unprecedented levels of urbanization and multicultural diversity all to some extent pre-dated by Goffman’s death in 1982, and yet with a Goffman-like continuity in how they affect the performance of our everyday lives today. Goffman’s work has been occasionally applied to the study of organizational communities (Ross, 2007), organization studies (Manning, 2008), and sensemaking via a shared concern over how events and experiences get structured and organized (Czarniawska, 2006), but considerable potential clearly remains to exploit its insights further.

At the heart of place readiness then there is a wider mission to try to organize the emergent orders of experiences of place users, in relation to the segmentations of types of place users present in various ecological community populations and locations, and how they make sense of themselves in relation to their movements. Place readiness also contains the sensemaking emphasis on agency in terms of *enactment* (Weick, 1979; Wicks & Freeman, 1998); with social actors making choices about whether or not to (re-)enter places, and how to observe or flout conventions associated with place, organization, and community in relation to their own status and identity.

Additional ongoing research topics fruitfully linking place readiness, organization studies, and community psychology, although too numerous for a fuller treatment here, might include, without being limited to: feelings of inclusion and belonging amongst intersectionally diverse individuals and groups present in places of community and organizational importance; the minimum social conditions required to foster an organized sense of place readiness across an interdependent cooperative community or organizational grouping; the disruptive interruptions and other competitive dynamics between places, locations, and roles that affect people's inclusion and presence coupling them to a particular community; the sense of readiness for forms of organizational change where place-related changes in location are implicated; how readiness cultivated in location-specific places feeds into and shapes wider community readiness for various programs and problem-solving; the dynamics of empowerment and participation shaping community, civic and organizational activism where new social forms or movements attempt to organize from relative disorder.

### ***Place Socialization***

If readiness captures a basic sense of fit and orientation towards a sense of place, socialization reflects a deeper acquisition of attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge required for

participating in a particular environment and community (van Maanen & Schein, 1979). It is a process much-discussed in relation to organizational newcomers and their induction (e.g. Antonacopoulou & Güttel, 2010; Fang, Duffy, & Shaw, 2011), has relevance for community psychology in terms of how vulnerable or marginalized groups (e.g. children, ethnic minorities, volunteers) can become more integrated into collectives (e.g. Hidalgo & Moreno, 2009), and at the level of places as physical settings, helps form part of our sense of self via place-identity (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983). Furthermore, organization socialization has theoretical links with sensemaking, given that it is a process involving identity confirmation, management of expectations, feedback seeking, and learning to act and attribute meaning in the face of surprises or discrepancies (Louis, 1980). I liken the place socialization phase of the current model to the analogous organizing sensemaking phase of *selection* (Weick et al., 2005), where a range of possible meanings and cues about a place get refined via selection into a sharper (although still nevertheless provisional) understanding of that place. Put another way, there is a move from a more basic noticing, ownership of self, and occupation of place to a deeper interpreting, comprehending, and sense of being in that place (Jeong & Brower, 2008; Weick, 2012).

The content of this selection during place socialization is likely to be concerned with the classification of types of places that organizational and community actors encounter, as well as distinctive characteristics of those places. As a place is mindfully occupied, enactment occurs as certain basic minimal rules are successfully observed (i.e. place readiness), which over time leads to selection of further ‘typifications’ and classifications of institutional roles, scripts, and frames; thus sense is retrospectively made of what the actions taken in a place say about identities, expectations, and situations or events (Weber & Glynn, 2006). There are potentially endless ways places might be typified and classified by people during their own socialization experiences, but some research offers guiding schemes and

ways of exploring key issues. Research on multi-location workers considers comparative factors such as time and space requirements, noise, delicacy or privacy, image maintenance, unpredictability, and communication requirements (Felstead, Jewson, & Walters, 2005; Hislop & Axtell, 2009). At the most generic level, working lives, at least many white-collar ones, are characterized by workers with some mobility to move frequently between the family home, the employer's premises, and a wider potential array of other places beyond those two, which may be mobile (e.g. car, public transport), recreational or community-based, or secondary extensions of workplaces (e.g. a consultant visiting a clients' office) (Hislop & Axtell, 2007). This larger latter category relates particularly strongly to the influential work of Ray Oldenburg (1999, 2001) on 'third places', other than work and home, often considered key locales for providing a sense of community, and characterized by their: high accessibility, provision of food and drink, relative affordability, welcoming and comfortable atmosphere, lack of status differentials, conversational activity, playfulness, humility, and mixture of newcomers and regulars. Third places include bookstores, coffee stores, and other 'hangouts', but there is some debate over whether they are in general decline (Oldenburg, 1999), or may be increasingly found in other co-existing virtual forms (Koles & Nagy, 2014; Soukup, 2006).

Of course, not all places will be easily categorized by all individuals, and so place socialization reflects this ongoing sensemaking struggle to achieve and adjust to a sense of place; as various places are utilized, personalized, and participated in (Oldenburg & Brissett, 1982). Often various features or characteristics of the place will be perceived in terms of tensions or trade-offs, between their instrumental, aesthetic, and symbolic pros and cons (Elsbach & Pratt, 2007; Hislop & Axtell, 2009). If these trade-offs prove difficult for individuals and groups to accept, then in the current model, there may be a reciprocal leftward shift back towards a questioning of place readiness and perhaps even a switch to a different place entirely, in any given cycle of the model.



The exact relationships of place socialization are intimately linked to wider forces shaping community and community socialization, chiefly in the form of globalization. Psychologically, in a more globalized world, people may spend longer before transitioning to the community responsibilities of adulthood, attach themselves to distinctive self-selected subcultures from a greater array of choices, and face confusion in managing multiple cultural identities (Arnett, 2002). A specialized discipline of ‘global-community psychology’ has even been proposed, to better understand and cope with how global events and forces create new socialization dynamics, as well as issues of identity, control, and well-being (Marsella, 1998). These debates reveal once more the complex relationships between place and community; places might be viewed here as potential anchors to be crucially maintained and reclaimed for securing a sense of community amidst forces of globalization that threaten it, via Edward Relph’s somewhat literally termed risk of ‘placelessness’ (Arefi, 1999; Relph, 1976). Place offers meaningful locations for socialization and situates it, manifests it, whilst community provides the social and ethical content for guiding agency and solidarity that might sustain the wider organization of socialization activities.

Additional important avenues of ongoing investigation relevant to place socialization in working lives might include, without being limited to: various psychological states and social mechanisms shaped by socialization that transform workers whilst they are using place (e.g. recovery, ‘flow’, engagement, curiosity, escapism, mindfulness, optimism); how sets of places become socially parsed and mentally classified into the cognitive sociologist’s notion of a ‘mindscape’ (Zerubavel, 1999); the aesthetics of gestalt arrangements of place features and how they relate to a community aesthetic; the work-life balance and leisure implications of working across various places within, across, and outside of communities; how anthropological concepts like ritual, liminality, and *communitas* can positively inform and describe place socialization (Olaveson, 2001); the interplay of more direct primary forms of

socialization and more indirect secondary forms to produce patterns of place socialization; a discussion of how socialization unfolds over shorter and longer organizational time-frames; how psychological contract processes operate at and in relation to particular places to elicit exit-voice-loyalty-neglect (EVLN) and other responses from community stakeholders; and the juggling of multiple place characteristic and identity trade-offs to achieve optimally socialized use of places to serve particular community needs and ends.

### ***Place Fulfilment***

If people are ready to occupy and be present in a place, and they are socialized into an appreciation of its use and character, then the third remaining phase of organizing logically rests on what can ultimately be attained and fulfilled by remaining at such a place and/or persisting in returning to it and engaging with it. In sensemaking terms, this is analogous to Weick's *retention* phase of organizing; a phase where a sense of place gains a greater firmness or plausibility of meaning, with associated identities and stories becoming more richly connected to past experiences, that in turn can guide further cycles of action and interpretation (Weick et al., 2005). Also relevant here from Figure 1 is a reciprocal feedback loop that captures how fulfilment cyclically shapes readiness and socialization phases across subsequent episodic visits and interactions at the place, reducing ambiguity and making it relatively difficult – but by no means impossible – to change the interpretation of a particular place.

Two focal constructs germane to the place fulfilment phase and prominent in the environmental and community psychology literature are place attachment and psychological sense of community (PSOC). Place attachment has been studied most thoroughly within environmental psychology, and can be defined in terms of a set of elements, including emotional bonds between people and a physical site, memories of past interactions at a place,

anticipated future interactions at a place, and a heightened sense that a place cannot easily be substituted for (Milligan, 1998). The core component is a positive affective emotional link, one that, over the course of repeated interactions in defining a setting such as a neighbourhood, reinforces a deeper place identity and sense of belonging, which in turn can facilitate various forms of community and civic participation (Fernández & Langhout, 2014). Recent conceptualizations of place attachment have increasingly acknowledged its holistic multidimensionality; the interdependence of people, place, and process variables that create the attachment, as well as the goal-oriented, need-fulfilling functions of the attachment (e.g. security, survival, self-esteem) (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Nevertheless, in the last forty years, as with organizational behavior, there has been more focus on the people or individual difference aspects than there has on place or process aspects (Lewicka, 2011), a situation that in this paper, with its focus on sensemaking processes of organizing across different types of places, I am trying to remediate.

PSOC is another construct that has a relatively long history in understanding the psychology of community places, but more so than place attachment, organizations as well. Like place attachment, PSOC (or just SOC), has typically been defined and measured in terms of an array of interrelated perceptions, but directed towards community membership and ties, rather than places per se. Four key elements include a sense of: group influence, group belonging or membership, need fulfilment, and shared emotional connections (McMillan & Chavis, 1986), although debate over the exact latent structure of the concept remains, and additional elements such as conscious identification and responsibility towards the welfare of a group and its members, can be separated out (Boyd & Nowell, 2014; Obst, Smith, & Zinciewicz, 2002). Where PSOC is relevant to place fulfilment here is in terms of its proximity to attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, it being a catalyst for forms of participation, local action, and community development (e.g. Chavis & Wandersman, 1990).

More broadly, sense of community has been conceptualized as a multilevel construct that spans individual and community levels, with individual and community place attachment being key predictors (Long & Perkins, 2007), highlighting the link between the two as discussed here. Furthermore, PSOC has strong parallels with workplaces and working lives, with much potential for incorporating linkages between overlapping and related organizational constructs that treat the workplace as a community referent (Klein & D'Aunno, 1986), including co-worker support, team orientation, team cohesion, citizenship behavior, psychological contracts, and organizational commitment, among others (Boyd & Nowell, 2014; Burroughs & Eby, 1998).

The label of place fulfilment represents the idea that, following from the readiness of various actors and their socialization of a place's key characteristics, various benefits accumulate and are retained in this fulfilment phase of organizing activity in working lives. Narrative elements and identities become more enduring, unequivocal, and deeply embraced in forms of cognitive and emotional attachment to shared groups and places, accompanied by a strengthened sense of community. Conceptually, there is a sense of familiarity and commitment, and in some cases, simple repetitions of 'mere exposure' to a place may be enough to engender these effects (Zajonc, 1968). Place fulfilment is meant to convey a sense of accumulation and a range of fulfilled outcomes, which might be in the form of: people deciding to become very regular attendees of a particular place, accomplishing feats of innovation and learning, experiencing profoundly fulfilling self-affirming psychological states such as self-actualization or ontological security, and a sustained growth of forms of human and social capital, the latter being a closely associated collective by-product of individuals' sense of community (Boyd & Nowell, 2014; Long & Perkins, 2007). These fulfilments reflect the principled aspirations of community psychology and related fields like organization development, to achieve humanistic community goals via empowerment of

vulnerable groups, reflexive social intervention, and the corresponding prevention of forces damaging to community health and well-being (Burke, 1997; Orford, 2008; Rappaport, 1987; Sarason, 1974). There may be a regional and urban scale of aggregation to some of these place fulfilment outcomes, with examples like Hollywood, Silicon Valley, and Wall Street coming to mind, from the developed economy of the U.S. at least. What these examples highlight is that despite some cumulative stability of meaningful outcomes being achieved over time at a location, place fulfilment is clearly not an idealistic teleological end-point, but merely a juncture in ongoing cycles of sensemaking, and hence always subject to further ecological inputs or creative-destructive shocks to the system that feed back into readiness and socialization all over again; whether they be crises, recoveries, or rebirths. For example, Silicon Valley may inspire a globally competitive spread of other hi-tech imitation places all around the world, whilst also creating more problematic local issues for working lives, including some masculinized ageism and long working hours in its communities, as well as overcrowding issues driving state regulatory reform over housing, investment, and transport (Cooper, 2000; Etzkowitz, 2013; Silicon Valley Leadership Group, 2013). Place fulfilment is thus necessarily a somewhat delicate and tentative process subject to adaptations; place attachments and sense of community can be periodically disrupted as stability-change and individual-community dialectics fall in and out of alignment (Brown & Perkins, 1992).

Additional avenues for investigation of place fulfilment in relation to community psychology and organization studies might include: how places are used to retrospectively make sense in deeply fulfilling ways via remembrance, commemoration, and history; how organizational places affect the continual balancing of the social, environmental, and financial demands of the 'triple bottom line'; how places generate enduring atmospheres and elements that become relatively locked in via sustaining and re-freezing mechanisms; the sensegiving narratives that leaders tell to constrain or enable a sense of place fulfilment; how

place fulfilment is shaped by various organizational and community forces of resilience, inertia, and crisis; how places can be sites of need fulfilment where self-actualization and positive psychological goals are realized; and whether various forms of community, organization, regional, urban, and town planning have their objectives fulfilled or thwarted by the levels of place fulfilment achieved.

## DISCUSSION

### *Interrogating and Refining the Model*

In outlining my model, I have also already presented some possible avenues for exploring each of its three phases a bit further and a bit more specifically. However, the model is very flexible regarding its scope and meaning, particularly with regard to what exactly constitutes places and working lives. Partly this is deliberate given the open systems nature of places, communities, and organizations endorsed by the model, but it is also partly a question of filling in gaps and framing new understandings of the interfaces between place, community and organization. Hence I make three further general suggestions here about how to test and refine the overall model.

Firstly, there is healthy room to elaborate on process, sensemaking, and complexity aspects of the model from various angles. This is important given that one of the ironies of places, if we view them as elements within complex open systems, is that degrees of endogeneity versus exogeneity, or insideness versus outsideness, are not always hard and fast distinctions (Cumming & Collier, 2005). The model describes three relatively endogenous phases of reciprocally linked place organizing, but also leaves room for exogeneity to run through it in the form of ecological inputs and outputs that feed into other places. In this sense the model needs to be tested and extended in terms of how various wider systemic processes play out in relation to its organizing sensemaking phases, within and across places,

organizations, and communities. These processes might include various ‘loops’ of social aggregation or disaggregation, role transitions and narrative sensemaking connections to other times and places (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010), place design feature interactions, organizational changes or crises, struggles for power or meaning over place, management of multiple identities, and considering various place boundaries (e.g. inter-organizational) and how they are spanned (e.g. Calvard, 2014; Hernes, 2004). In short, the processes I propose operate in interaction with other surrounding processes, as well as the continuities and discontinuities of multiple places. Such analyses may seek to explore social, cognitive, and environmental mechanisms that organize and make sense of place. The three phases of interlinked organizing are presented as closely overlapping, reciprocal, and fluid, and thus should be investigated from a process perspective that takes time and a pluralistic variety of change dynamics (spirals, oscillations, cycles) seriously (Eisenhardt, 2000; Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas, & Van de Ven, 2013). A process approach is also aligned to some degree with a social mechanisms approach, seeking a middle-range explanatory ground between pure description and universal laws (Hedström & Swedberg, 1996). Ways of doing this might include testing the model’s sensemaking aspects in conjunction with other ‘sense’ concepts, such as sensegiving, sensebreaking, sensehiding (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014), or testing the model’s narrative progression from more negative, dark, flipside angles of place in terms of territoriality conflicts, anomie, mental health issues, protests, riots, crowds, or community breakdowns and reformations that struggle to materialize.

Secondly, there is a need to test and refine the model from a multiplicity of perspectives. Geographically, if place and space are thought of in psychological, intellectual, and ideological terms as well as natural, physical, material, and social, then places themselves are the landscaped focus for organizing sets of relational, interconnected forces and perspectives anyway (Sack, 1992). In more research-oriented terms, this means taking an

approach that is multi-paradigmatic (Schultz & Hatch, 1996; Shepherd & Challenger, 2013).

Indeed, organizations themselves can be studied to reveal how they produce knowledge paradigmatically (Kilduff, Mehra, & Dunn, 2011), and community psychology and sensemaking have their own paradigmatic emphases on ecology, context, development, empowerment, and social construction. Reflecting on these meta-theoretical issues and biases will be important for examining how space, place, organization, and community shape and are shaped by dialogic knowledge-power relationships in forms of research and practice.

Given that the same people want different things in different places at different times (Goodman & Goodman, 1947), different people use the same places in different ways (Cattell, Dines, Gesler, & Curtis, 2008), and researchers of place are by definition unlikely to remain scientifically detached from the places they are studying, a strong positivistic position seems perennially unlikely to yield fruitful findings on its own.

Thus greater pluralism needs to be achieved in theories, methods, and analytics. This can be achieved by considering diverse multi-layered, multi-causal webs that seek to more fully articulate the complex relationships that occur in and across places (Massey, 1995). Once again, the use of rich, holistic ecological metaphors of lifespan and Lewinian lifespaces feels appropriate and beneficial to extending the current model in line with aspects of community psychology and organization studies agendas (e.g. Newbrough, 1973; Starik & Rands, 1995). Using mixed methods and mixed analytic techniques within single studies can produce multiple ways of looking at the same community and place settings (Molina-Azorin, Bergh, Corley, & Ketchen, 2014; Zyphur, 2009). Critical management perspectives and more radical postmodern views also offer alternative ways of defining and acting in relation to place readiness, socialization, and fulfilment, in terms of emancipation, questioning dominant discourses, linguistic playfulness, and other forms of performativity aimed at social change (Newbrough, 1992; Spicer, Alvesson, & Kärreman, 2009). The study of technologies in



workplaces (Leonardi & Barley, 2010), of organizational change management (Graetz & Smith, 2010), and of management learning (Sturdy, 2004), have all been argued to benefit from the ongoing synthesis of multiple philosophies and perspectives. For its own part, community psychology also has some precedent in aspiring towards interdisciplinary research (Maton, Perkins, & Saegert, 2006).

Finally, in making good on a commitment to context, further development of the current model needs to wrestle with specifying levels of analysis and typifying aspects of place and community context. This means some cataloguing of institutions, occupations, systems, and person-person and person-situation interaction orders in any particular study. There are different specification challenges here. The classification of types of community actors in various places relevant to working lives is one; customer service workers, public service workers, mobile workers, commuters, manual labourers, entrepreneurs, artists, those labouring within an informal economy, high-status professionals, children, parents, students, pensioners, the unemployed, the homeless, and other diverse minorities and stakeholder representatives. Furthermore, the analysis of these ‘place users’ should benefit from being considered dynamically as a loosely coupled process, as people partially engage in multiple intersecting roles, and experimental provisionally or partially with different ones (Ibarra, 1999; Sandiford & Seymour, 2013). As well as users, there is the classification and taxonomic arrangements of place characteristics; some existing schemes of this kind were discussed earlier in this paper, although ongoing research should continue, perhaps along lines analogous to, and crossing over with, the more extensive work on job characteristics and job design in organization studies (Oldham & Hackman, 2010). Borrowing from a ‘sociology of everyday life’ perspective offers another socially dynamic and emergent perspective for integrating place characteristics and place users within the organizing model of working lives (e.g. Kalekin-Fishman, 2013).

There are also contextual issues inherent to the current model concerning aggregation and units of analysis; both with regard to the public scale of the place or space (Taylor & Spicer, 2007), as well as the multilevel quantitative aggregation into social units of team, organization, and network still developing as an approach within organizational behavior and across management studies (Klein & Kozlowski, 2000; Kozlowski, Chao, Grand, Braun, & Kuljanin, 2013; Mathieu & Chen, 2011). In addition to top-down and environmental influences, there are bottom-up dynamics of emergence, an area that a qualitative sensemaking perspective emphasizes quite strongly, in terms of intersubjectivity, heedful interrelating, and interpersonal communication and interaction cycles that build locally from the bottom up (Weick, 1995). Research on place and community in relation to organization and working lives needs to bring these issues together more explicitly to bear on the ever-present micro-macro paradox (Boyd & Angelique, 2002; Hodgson, 2012; Keys & Frank, 1987). In response to this, community psychology continues to embrace and explore a systems change perspective (Foster-Fishman & Behrens, 2007), whilst geographers and organizational scholars are continuing to engage with a relational perspective that emphasizes boundaries, network ties and other social linkages between entities (e.g. Sack, 1992; Shipilov, Gulati, Kilduff, Li, & Tsai, 2014). What these related approaches all have in common is a concern with understanding the components and relationships of complex systems more precisely, dynamically and accessibly, which is crucial to achieving powerful descriptions and explanations of the functioning of organizations, places and communities via the current sensemaking model.

### ***Future Research and Practical Implications***

Beyond the directions discussed above, future research can continue to explore the parallel interfaces between place, organization studies, and community psychology in a few

other ways. Firstly, there is the common issue of dilemmas, dualisms, and paradoxes such as stability-change, individualism-socialism, and exploration-exploitation that relate to purposeful collectives. A consideration of place and space adds further dichotomies like private-public, natural-man made, local-global, *gemeinschaft-gesellschaft*, and rural-urban. As with the current model, these paradoxes demand certain cyclical organizing responses; tensions are worked through via integration, splitting, and dialectical synthesis responses as systems oscillate between two sides of a dichotomy, using each as a platform for spurring on the other (Farjoun, 2010; Rappaport, 1981; Smith & Lewis, 2011). These more complex understandings may help to elucidate challenging links across and within place readiness, socialization, and fulfilment. The capacity to dynamically resolve these dilemmas and movements between social states over time may offer clues to resilience in coping with organizational and community crises of change (Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche, & Pfefferbaum, 2008).

Future research will also need to continue to mine and ‘stand on the shoulders’ of the work of influential geographers, sociologists and other seminal theorists to understand the interplay between space, place, organization or organizing, and community (Hubbard et al., 2004). This means taking organizational, community, and place-based constructs and finding ways of associatively forging them together (e.g. Long & Perkins, 2007). The current model hints at these associations in terms such as socialization, identity, attachment, and commitment. This means paying attention to where common language and terminology occurs; for example, there is the significant organizational literature on ‘communities of practice’ and organizational learning (e.g. Brown & Duguid, 1991; Wenger & Snyder, 2000), where a combined focus on community relationships, the experience of social worlds of interactions, and social systems of learning might be mutually beneficial to scholars of organizations and communities (Elkjaer, 2004; Wenger, 2000).

Similar to communities of practice, those working at the community-organization interface need to conduct research to keep defining, revising, and discovering new forms or designs of organization and organizing (Greenwood & Miller, 2010; Greenwood, Hinings, & Whetten, in press). Community psychology, with its emphasis on empowerment, diversity, volunteering, ecology, citizenship, and social movements also enriches ways of researching new, alternative or emerging organizational forms (Florin & Wandersman, 1990; Rao, Morrill, & Zald, 2000; Speer & Hughey, 1995). In terms of these contemporary emerging forms of organization, this may lead to further research and reflections on how organizations and communities relate to notions of utopia or dystopia (Parker, 1998), sensemaking that is more about imaginative prospective envisioning than retrospective meaning-making (Wright, 2005), and a more nuanced understanding of organizations and/or communities that are temporary, virtual, meta-, and globally evolving (Bakker, 2010; Gulati, Puranam, & Tushman, 2012; Introna & Brigham, 2007; Lewin, Long, & Carroll, 1999). Crucially, place gives form and content in and through space, shaping and shaped by community, and as a triad, they bridge toward corresponding concepts and debates concerning organizations and their forms.

Future research also needs to continue to reflect on the ecological, relational, and multilevel methodological challenges facing the study of places embedded and enmeshed in organizing and community settings. Many lenses and options are possible. Community psychology continues to emphasize action research, systems analysis, change-based intervention, OD techniques like appreciative inquiry (Boyd & Bright, 2007), and the ‘constituent validity’ provided by broad stakeholder participation (Keys & Frank, 1987). Organization scholarship is also sympathetic to forms of action research (Cassell & Johnson, 2006), as well as useful social scientific notions of structuration, discourse, and reflexivity to guide methods and analysis (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Barley & Tolbert, 1997; Hardy, Phillips, & Clegg, 2001). Essentially, research on place, community, and organization

requires some stepping in and out of a shifting flow of context, reflecting on a multiplicity of Lewinian forces and perspectives, as well as in some cases catalyzing and adjusting them. In short, it requires sensemaking. Whilst quantitative survey and analytic techniques will doubtless remain accessible and efficient, there are perhaps other more mixed method techniques that could be utilized to greater effect, including social network analysis (Boyd, 2014; Neal & Christens, 2014), and other techniques for vividly mapping spatial and social locations and causal linkages such as psychogeography and cognitive mapping (Biesta & Cowell, 2012; Eden, 1992; Kitchin, 1994).

The practical implications of this paper for dealing with place mirror, perhaps unsurprisingly, some of the challenges inherent to the research side. Places can form challenging and influential backdrops to working lives, inviting people and groups to act out some of their best and worst visions and behaviors. Some or even most of the time, people may not be aware of how they are occupying a place, or of the possibilities for change. The sensemaking perspective of the current paper suggests that the people present in a place are striving for a certain positive coherence of meaning, for themselves personally, and in relation to others. Thus in the first instance, those in charge of managing places should think carefully about, and try to prioritize and articulate, the overall purpose of the environment – be it to foster solidarity and a sense of unified community, to celebrate diversity, or to encourage happy, creative, and productive workers. Ideally, the purpose will at some points concern a humanized, ethical respect for the dignity, inclusion, well-being, and other needs of the various people occupying a place. Nevertheless, purposes may vary and conflict in terms of their ethical, aesthetic, economic, technical, and scientific emphases. At the hardest edges of capitalist imperatives, there may need to be place-based compromises struck between the emancipation of workers and consumers trying to protect or preserve a sense of community versus other administrative and managerial efforts to regulate a place (Marglin, 2008).

Furthermore, any grander purpose is likely to trickle down into more specific physical, social, and psychological issues, many of which may involve trade-offs (Grant, Christianson, & Price, 2007). The current model allows managers to separate place-related issues and agendas out into pragmatically focused areas of readiness, socialization, and fulfilment.

It follows that those in control should recognize and account for the relational, contingent character of places; acknowledging that a multiplicity of places will be used in different ways at different times to meet different needs, and that no one place can be all things to all people, but rather, that multiple places can complement each other. Under a more socio-technical view, places can be dealt with in practice as technology, but organically, with diverse place users able to continuously and flexibly adjust, change, re-organize, customize, and give feedback about the features of a place that are discrepant and trigger sensemaking (Griffith, 1999). This balanced, naturalistic, varied approach that empowers and gives people ownership and autonomy can serve to optimally maximize the synergy and complementarity of multiple places; the idea that there should always be places to escape from and to periodically and recurrently to assist in the making of sense, the loosely coupled performing of various interdependent roles, and moving rhythmically onwards to perform another activity or fulfil another need if and when appropriate.

Widely generalizable practical prescriptions beyond these are likely to prove elusive, and the organizational change mantra of there being ‘no one best way’ to manage organizational change is arguably no less relevant for place and community in working lives (Burnes, 1996). Any practical intervention towards a place and its associated communities needs to be adept at spatially zooming in and zooming out between the micro elements of everyday experiences amidst working lives, and larger contextual issues and trends that fall somewhat outside the scope of this paper, such as current organizational cultures, global urbanization, smart and sustainable cities, governmental efforts at regional planning and

place management, political narratives, market conditions, vulnerable groups affected by geographical conditions of inequality, and so on.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper I have sought to review literature on the concept of place as it appears within and across community psychology and organization studies, as well as some other relevant fields of inquiry. Ironically, this requires some careful navigation, and in some cases, place has perhaps not received the attention it deserves, or been locked into particular perspectives that have remained somewhat incomplete or separated from each other. I have tried to argue that place is a powerful concept linking organizations and communities, given that organizations, places, and communities are mutually constitutive of each other. I then presented and elaborated upon a cyclical organizing model, grounded in a process-oriented sensemaking perspective, to show in a purposefully broad manner how community and organizational states are shaped in part by a sense of place that continuously emerges through social-psychological phases of sensemaking activity, engaged in throughout movements of working life. The model has implications for research and practice that align with corresponding interfaces between community psychology and organization studies. Overall, the model tries to show in part how sensemaking provides a crucial interpretive scaffold whereby individuals and groups strive to practically connect the significance of their emergent experiences in organizations and communities to grander ‘wicked’ societal issues and discourses amidst ever-larger, nested ecological contexts (Bishop & Dzidic, 2014; Jeong & Brower, 2008). Places provide the ground against which we in our working lives are the circling figures, ever trying to make sense of our own personal place amidst community and organizational collectives anew. As T. S. Eliot wrote, ‘We shall not cease from

exploration/And the end of all our exploring/Will be to arrive where we started/And know the place for the first time’.

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FIGURE 1

## Process Model of an Organizing Sense of Place in Working Lives

AGGREGATION SPACE

